

Creating a Municipal Training System

Slovakia

Background

As Slovakia changes from a highly centralized system of governance to one with substantial authority at the local government level, new demands are placed on local elected councils. A new set of skills and knowledge are now necessary to function effectively as a local government mayor or councilor in one of Slovakia's 2,500 elected councils. It was the consensus of local government officials that a training program to reach such a large population of elected leaders effectively must be large scale and sustainable over time without donor support. The training design had to take into account that training elected leaders is a continuous process, in step with the constant renewal of local councils in a democratic system.

Innovation

A decision was made to build on the success of the U.N. Elected Leadership Training Series. Materials that had already been used in Central and Eastern Europe were adapted to the local context by a steering committee with representation from municipalities, ZMOS, the universities, and the local training profession. Then a pyramid system of training was put in place: two expatriate trainers already familiar with the manuals conducted a training-of-trainers program for 12 local trainers, who in turn worked with 54 mayors and councilors chosen based on their interest and background to participate as apprentice trainers. The purpose was to develop a cadre of trainers who were already schooled in experiential learning skills and local elected leaders who could bring unique experiences to the program and hone the curriculum to fit the evolving context in which Slovak local governments operate.

The training curriculum and approach (experiential learning based on 11 modules, each representing a distinct role of an elected leader) were new for Slovakia. To generate interest in and comments on the training, 13 one-day marketing workshops were held with 265 representatives from various local councils. Based on this input, a decentralized training delivery system was adopted using the 10 regional centers of the Foundation for Local Self Governance. A number of the workshops will be three-day programs covering two modules each, with the expectation that over time a number of local leaders will receive training in all 11 modules. But to be responsive to unique local needs and constraints, supplemental training programs are also being designed; for example, for an entire council membership.

The cost of the training is projected to be \$40–50/training day, including room and board. This low cost will be achieved by putting the training delivery immediately in the hands of a Slovak counterpart institution. Donor support will fund approximately two thirds of the cost for the first six months and one third for the second six months. After a year the training program is expected to be self supporting.

Results

The system is in place, and the first leadership training will take place in early 1997. It is expected to provide a sustainable training program to serve the training needs of elected local government officials in Slovakia.

Summary

To provide continuous training for large numbers of local elected leaders, Slovakia developed a cadre of trainers using a pyramid system. The system is in place and is expected to provide a sustainable training program.

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